

## **Assessment of Finds from the CEMEX, Kensworth to Rugby Pipeline (CKR-16)**

### ***Alan Vince***

A small number of finds recovered from archaeological fieldwork on the line of the Kensworth to rugby pipeline. All the finds come from a single context, 108, and consist of a Mayen lava quernstone, fragments of fired clay and a number of fragments of a single composite iron object, probably a heckle comb.

### **Description**

#### **Fired Clay**

Three small fragments of fired clay were recovered. These are probably from a daub structure although none preserved a wattle impression. The fabric of the fragments was examined at x20 magnification and was seen to consist of a sandy groundmass with some sparse limestone inclusions and impressions from burnt-out organic matter, more probably straw than roots.

#### **Iron**

Two groups of iron fragments were recovered from context 108. These probably both came from a single object. This object consisted of a large number of tines, some of which have survived intact and are between 95mm and 100mm long. They are round-sectioned and have a flattened head consistent with being hammered through wood. About 12-14mm from the head some of the tines show evidence for a thin sheet of iron and some of the tines are also bent just below this point.

These features are consistent with the object consisting of a metal sheet pierced by numerous tines, all probably of similar size, and possibly with a wooden backing (although no trace of wood grain was observed).

Such an object is likely to have been a carding comb or heckle, used in the alignment of fibres for the production of yarn. Loose heckle teeth are not an uncommon find but this find is better preserved and might provide a specialist with more information on the reconstruction and typology of the object.

#### **Stone**

A single fragment of a rotary quern was recovered from context 108. This fragment is made from grey vesicular lava containing abundant clinopyroxene crystals, some of which appear

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to be zoned. The fragment comes from the lower stone of the quern and has dressed lower and outer surfaces and a deeply scored upper surface.

Such querns were used in the Roman, mid-Saxon and later periods and there is little to distinguish small fragments of Roman from mid-Saxon examples.

### Assessment

The finds indicate domestic activity and possibly textile production and cannot be closely dated. It is possible that a specialist examination of the heckle comb fragments would produce a closer date, as well as confirmation or refutation of the identification. Iron carding combs were traditionally associated with the martyrdom of St Blaise in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and therefore were probably known by that date.

The comb fragments should be sent to a specialist for confirmation of their identification and further assessment.

*Table 1*

<b>Context</b>	<b>REFNO</b>	<b>class</b>	<b>subfabric</b>	<b>Object</b>	<b>Nosh</b>	<b>NoV</b>	<b>Weight</b>
108	SF3	STONE	MAYEN LAVA	ROTARY QUERN	1	1	739
108	SF1	IRON		HECKLE COMB	8	1	116
108	SF2	IRON		HECKLE COMB	36	1	258